

NCAA Men's Frozen Four: Wisconsin vs Denver

Saturday, April 11, 2026

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

T-Mobile Arena

Denver Pioneers

David Carle

Kent Anderson

Rieger Lorenz

Samu Salminen

Finals Postgame Media Conference



interesting because there were so many powerful shots from you guys. Bring us through that play.

RIEGER LORENZ: Yeah, like I touched on earlier, our first 40 definitely wasn't even close to good enough. We needed big spark there. Glad I could give the guys that little bump.

DC has been open me all four years I've been here getting to the net, use my body. I finally listened to him. Got in front of the net and banged home.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take an opening comment from Coach Carle.

DAVID CARLE: Unbelievable game. Certainly we bent but didn't break. Johnny kept us within striking range. It's a 60-minute game for a reason.

We'd obviously like to acknowledge Mike Hastings, Wisconsin, the season they had. They're very similar to us, we going through some real tough times in January, got hot at the right time, went on an unbelievable run.

I'd probably say it's the hardest team we've played against all year, just how they were on it, their forecheck, made it real challenging to be able to break pucks out. We saw it against North Dakota, as well. It was an excellent team on their end.

We found a way again. Johnny kept us within range, as we have found a way in other games. These guys, we saved our best period for last. We found a way to make one more play.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions.

Q. Kent, your teammate just alluded to it. Was it a really bad first 40 minutes? If so, what happened in the third?

KENT ANDERSON: Yeah, like Rieger says, it's the belief in this group. Every single guy in that room is capable of doing great things. We weren't satisfied with the first 40. We stuck with it. We believed in each other.

Denver 2, Wisconsin 1

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Denver. Questions...

Q. Is there just a comfort level you have when you're getting outshot like that, that you guys are not out of it?

KENT ANDERSON: Yeah, I mean, Johnny Hicks is unbelievable. He's undefeated. We couldn't have done any of this without him.

Tonight our group stuck with it, they believed in each other. Hickey was there for us every step of the way. He kept us in it. Just waited for us to score. Eventually we did.

RIEGER LORENZ: Yeah, I think he was battle tested. Our conference does a great job with that. The NCHC Frozen Faceoff we went through, a loss in overtime, close games like that. We were comfortable with that, even though we weren't happy with the first 40. Stuck with it and obviously came out victorious.

SAMU SALMINEN: The crew in the locker room, tough first two periods, I felt like every person bought in, do what we were capable of doing all year. Just no better feeling than this. I'm so grateful these guys. Just all those guys in that locker room knew what we can do from the very first day. Executed everything so well for the season, so...

Couldn't be more grateful.

Q. Rieger, your goal came off a rebound. It was

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There's never a doubt that someone was going to go out there and make a play. In the third period, the boys were able to do that.

Q. (No microphone.)

KENT ANDERSON: More intensity, sticking with it.

Q. You guys, when you were underclassmen, were with a bunch of players that had won two years before you won your first national championship. Was there anything that you were able in the last 36 hours to pass onto your teammates, having gone through this before?

RIEGER LORENZ: Yeah, I think DC talks about it a lot. It's harder to win as an upperclassman, as an older guy, a leader.

He challenged us in the middle of January. There were some dark times in the middle of our season. I think the leadership group and the young guys responded really well to that.

I think it's perseverance. It's a proven formula to win at this level. We finally bought into what coach was taking saying. Obviously it served us very well.

SAMU SALMINEN: I can't respond as well as they did because they were here winning in less time.

Everybody probably knows I had a little bit different story, coming here after two years, there was one expectation that we were talking a lot come in this program, it's winning the national championship, because that's everything this program is all about.

I'm sure it's not going to be the last one in this dynasty. I'm sure that these younger guys who came in, they've bought into this very well. Obviously they were huge pieces our team this season. I'm so excited to see those guys playing against next year and doing again.

KENT ANDERSON: Yeah, great experience in the room. Like we've said before, it's the reason you come to Denver. Samu, Pohlkamp, they came to Denver for a reason, that was to win this game. With that being the goal day one, the belief, the trust in each other, it feels so good to get it done.

Q. Samu, since you have played for another program, what is it about the Denver culture that seems to always come through and win these national championships?

SAMU SALMINEN: I think he it's just the standard we have in every single day on the practices and how we treat each others, how people treat us in Denver. It's very special place to be.

I feel like every single person who steps in that locker room, they know what it's all about, and that's winning. It's all about team-first mentality. We don't have individuals in this team. If we do, that's a short run for those guys.

I feel like our whole team has bought into that really well whole year. That's credit for the older guys who played here last decades, last few years when Denver's been winning championships.

I feel like that's the legacy that we try to represent for the younger kids, as well, on our team. Like I said earlier, I'm super happy to see those guys doing it again. Every single guy who is coming into this program going to have the same mentality. It's not easy here. That's what we want. No one wants it easy here. When we do it together, these moments are for.

Q. There's probably no better city to win the championship in. What has this Vegas experience been like for you guys these past couple of days, playing in a packed arena, possibly celebrating in the city tonight?

KENT ANDERSON: Yeah, I mean, T-Mobile, it was an incredible atmosphere both Thursday night and tonight. Denver fans are loud. Have all the parents in the building. It's an easy city to get fans to come to.

It was such a fun game. To be able to see our families after the game on the ice, I don't think there could have been a better spot for it.

Obviously we'll go back to the hotel and enjoy our night from there.

THE MODERATOR: Rieger, what does that look like?

RIEGER LORENZ: Yeah, I mean, what is it, it's 6:18. DC said we have a 1:30 flight back home. That's a lot of runway for our guys (laughter). We'll enjoy our night. I've never been to Vegas, so I'm looking forward to seeing what the city has to offer.

THE MODERATOR: Samu, what do you have for the evening? Celebrating in Helsinki, too.

SAMU SALMINEN: I called my parents right off the ice. It's probably a nerve-wracking game for them being up at 4

a.m. watching it.

I'm glad that we had a lot of parents here a lot of families supporting us. I hope that they get to enjoy this win with us tonight and tomorrow morning and next week and week after (laughter).

Q. 31 blocked shots tonight. The NCHC offensive defenseman of the year Eric Pohlkamp. Tell me about his commitment to defense and blocking shots.

KENT ANDERSON: Yeah, obviously you guys know Eric is an unbelievable player. That's what it takes at this time of year, full commitment. Five blocks is for easy task. He's been banged up pretty much the entire back half of the season. Just his determination, he didn't quit. Obviously he's a leader for our team. He doesn't wear a letter, but...

He's an inspiration. When he's doing that stuff, it reflects on the other guys. It was a huge thing for our team.

THE MODERATOR: 31 shots, that's a lot. What does it say about tonight.

RIEGER LORENZ: I think it's the standard. DC preaches that when we got on campus our freshman year. No matter who you are, we have great many players that come through Denver, no matter who you are, you have to play as a team, the way we want to play.

It's a proven formula to win. PK is no exception. He has 18, 19 goals as a defenseman. One of the best players in the country. He's playing the same way as everybody else is. That's what makes this place so special. That's why we've got a lot of national championships.

Q. Denver is a very prestigious athletic program, but it is one with a smaller profile. What does it mean to be able to carry that torch for the little guy?

THE MODERATOR: Who wants to take that one, boys?

RIEGER LORENZ: It's a smaller school. Obviously we're the top sport on campus, you might say. You come to Denver, they care a lot about their hockey. It's a super special place. I know all three of us once we stepped on campus, we never wanted to leave.

It's pretty emotional that four years has gone by so quickly. I'm so grateful for my teammates, my brothers, DC, the coaching staff for bringing me in. They've made me into a player that I'm proud of and also a man that I'm proud of.

I'm super grateful for everybody that's helped me along the way. Yeah, it's unbelievable, two national championships

in four years is something special. Yeah, it's awesome.

THE MODERATOR: A record 11th for the Pioneers.

Q. Samu, your shoulder, what happened there? How are you feeling?

SAMU SALMINEN: It's been bugging me a little bit since the Loveland. Nothing too crazy. You battle through it. I like this part of season, guys are playing with some sort of injuries. You want to do everything you can to help the team. I'm glad we did.

THE MODERATOR: Guys, congratulations. Have fun tonight - not too much. Thanks for the time.

We'll continue with questions for Coach Carle.

Q. Your players said the first two periods weren't good enough. What didn't make it good enough? Was it purely intensity that made the change in the third?

DAVID CARLE: Yeah, I mean, not a lot tactically. I'll say I don't think it was as bad as it looked. Again, we were bending, we weren't breaking. They throw and funnel a lot of stuff to the net. I think what we struggled with the most was obviously winning some wall battles and getting the puck out of our end. You're stuck dumping and changing because you're tired. It's hard to build momentum that way.

We did it a couple times in the first and second, but just not sustained enough like we were able to in the third period.

Whether it was the urgency of the last 20 minutes or what have you... It certainly came out our best period in the last 20. There wasn't, again, a lot tactically that we changed. It was just trying to continue to sting with what we wanted to do, knowing that for them to play that way, it's also really hard to do that for three full periods, to be on it as much as they are.

We felt like if we could just get a little bit better and continue to try to stick with it, there might be some openings. Certainly that occurred.

Again, happy it's a 60-minute game rather than a 40-minute game. It just took us a while to kind of break through with what they were doing.

Q. For Kyle and Johnny to come in as freshmen, play the way they did, did you see anything from the start of the season until now in their growth and progress, buying into your culture and program to perform at the championship level?

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DAVID CARLE: Yeah, I think by the time you get to this stage, nobody's really freshmen anymore. Everybody's just a member of our team. I think that happens pretty early on within our program.

Again, you talked to three guys here previously who just really -- I mean, you need great leadership to impart that. We can only say so many things at coaches. Great teams, eventually they are led from within. Our group got to that point in the second half. A big credit to the three of them and Boston and many of our other veteran players, but also the young guys to buy into wanting to do something special.

So with 10 freshmen on the roster, we knew they were going to have to step up and get better throughout the year. Certainly they did that. We're practically proud of 'em. It took everybody to have the season we wanted to have.

Again, proud of the efforts of the young guys, old guys, it all came together at the right time over the last two and a half months.

Q. As a coach, you sit there and see things, how hard is it for you to not say something to the players, fight that urge to not say something for the sake of saying something?

DAVID CARLE: Yeah, I think I understand your question.

Yeah, you want to project some calmness, and certainly to the group that it's not a 911 situation we're in. We're not down 3-0. It was a one-shot game. It was a shot from range where we didn't have a great gap, they got speed through. I thought we did a better job in the second period of kind of pushing some of their shots to the outside even more.

Again, I think we were confident it was going to be as well as they played throughout the whole 60 minutes, we just felt like if we could improve our game 5% to 10% and theirs decreased, because it's hard to play to that level the whole time. Most teams, us included, the games we dominate or win, we're not doing it for the full 60 minutes. There's ebbs and flows. There's moments in the game where you have a team down or pinned and you have to make 'em pay. We were certainly able to do that with the two goals we scored. We were able to survive enough to keep the game within range when they had us pinned into our end.

That's hockey. There's momentum swings. It's trying to manage that, stay calm behind the bench, continue to encourage the team to do what they need to do, stick with

what we thought would give us success.

Q. At what point in the season did you realize that Johnny Hicks was going to be your guy in net for potentially the long haul?

DAVID CARLE: When Quentin Miller got injured, he had the opportunity to go in. Talked a lot about that moment. We were winless and seven, got a big win on the road at North Dakota Saturday night. Quentin played unbelievable in the game. Then we come back home, play St. Cloud, blow a 2-0 lead. Really the Saturday game is a must-win game. I think we were 13-11 at the time. Q goes down two minutes into the game with a non-contact injury on the lower body.

Johnny hadn't started a game all year. He'd come in relief in January during the seven-game winless stretch. So he had some action. Come in, 12-13 in the pair-wise, just blown a lead at home, hadn't been very good at home up until that point. He came in. I think it raised the guys' level of urgency. We all believe in Johnny, but none of us knew Johnny would do what Johnny did over the last 16, 17 games. It was that spark of urgency the group needed. Won the game 6-0. We didn't lose after that.

It's pretty remarkable. To come in that moment, you really learn about a person, how he's unfazed coming into that game, how he played the next game against Duluth. He got injured, 4-1 game. We hold onto win 4-3 against Duluth. John miraculously comes back on Saturday and shuts them out. I think the first time all year Max Plante had been held off the score sheet for a weekend. John was a big part of that, as well.

Probably early on just seeing how he handled that. You saw how he handled the Spence collision, gets up, regroup, goes back at it.

THE MODERATOR: So you're going to keep him?

DAVID CARLE: We're going to keep him (smiling).

Q. It's hard to ignore the parallels between this weekend and 2022.

DAVID CARLE: It is.

Q. It's hard to ignore the parallels from 2022. You have Michigan in overtime, then play Mike Hastings. Is that something you could draw on? Also comment on the general parallels there.

DAVID CARLE: Not really. I mean, I'll say it was a similar message in the room between the second and third.

Completely different group of players. Yeah, it's weird how it all kind of shook down the way that it did between the two games, so...

I don't have much more to comment on it than that. We're just proud of our guys. Obviously have a lot of respect for Mike, the run they went on. Couldn't be prouder of our team for sticking with it. Just the adversity we went through midyear. To come out of that I think gave us belief in times of trouble that we were going to be able to find our way through on Thursday and certainly tonight.

We could have thrown in the towel a long time ago, and the guys didn't. They committed to each other. That's what champions are made of.

Q. You mentioned earlier you didn't really have to change things tactically in the third, but made a couple personnel changes. Was that something you saw leading into the third? Was it to spark the lines?

DAVID CARLE: I mean, we talked about truthfully just throwing it all and jumbling it to a degree. But we wanted to give them kind of a chance. Yeah, we started the third, the message in the room was a lot of what we talked about. So to then jumble all the lines might give a sense of panic to the players.

We just stuck with the one change. It was a comfortable change because that was the line that scored against Michigan on Thursday night, the game-tying goal. We put them together because of our six-on-five personnel. We needed to shift out of a group. They went out and did a good job, played a lot in overtime together. It made sense just to make that change.

Obviously it came through again for us. We didn't make any other changes beyond that. Some D pairing switches. I know 5 and 9 went together a little bit more. Certainly that arguably Garrett Brown's best game of his career for us. I thought he was excellent. One of the few guys that really consistently moving his feet and wanting the puck on his stick, wants to try to make a difference and make plays. Again, not an easy team to do it against with their puck pressure play.

Q. Obviously last May you were coming off what was a tough loss in the Frozen Four. You had interest from multiple NHL programs. You made a decision to stay in Denver and extend your contract. How has that decision resonating with you now?

DAVID CARLE: I haven't thought about it since I did it, to be honest. We tell our players to be two feet in where they're at. I think we have to do the same thing as the

adults in the room.

Having had the interest is flattering. Learned a lot. Built different relationships, as we have over the last number of the years. I think that's a good thing for our program to do that.

Again, once the decision was made, it was 100% focused on what we wanted to try and do here, the excitement about the freshmen group we had, the team coming back. Had a chip on our shoulder from day one. Continued to work and grow throughout the year.

Couldn't be happier and more proud of the group for how the season culminated.

Q. Can we admit now that Eric was a little hurt in the last few weeks? Talk about how maybe he was a little limited and how the other guys stepped up in that situation. Also how it affects his psyche and still have a positive contribution, not let it get to his head.

DAVID CARLE: Yeah, it's not easy. He's dealing with a hand injury, dealing with a foot injury. But you're right, other people stepped up in a big-time way, as they have throughout the year for us. I mean, we were not immune to injury throughout the year.

Like the guys said, for Eric to be able to battle through, other people to step up. Brown was out for a little while. We played five D I think for two or three weekends. That was kind of around the time period that Eric got hurt. His minutes were elevated. He laid everything on the line for his team and his teammates.

Eric is a real emotional guy, he loves his team. But he's very competitive, as well. He would have loved to have won that award yesterday, but I think he's happy for Max obviously and can recognize the season that he had.

Again, for Eric to do what he did, again, a guy with more than 40 points on our team, Eric led our team in scoring. I'll say it again, if a team is led by a defenseman it's a lot easier to game plan to take away a D than it is a dynamic forward who has a lot of supporting cast around him.

Eric, we really challenged him, too, in the second half to try and understand that there's certain parts of his game that will get him places in his career, but there's other parts of his game that need to develop and grow to stay in places that he would like to stay in, which was the National Hockey League with San Jose.

He has great qualities offensively with his shot, things he can do, but the growth in his defensive play throughout the

second half and down the stretch, that showed us that he's going to have the ability to stay in the NHL, which is not easy to make it to the NHL, but it's a hell of a lot harder to stay in the NHL than make it there.

Q. While I can certainly respect when you say you did not let any NHL offers or rumors distract your focus, I can't imagine that part of that is because of your special connection to the university. Talk about what this schools means to you and the opportunity to win national championships here.

DAVID CARLE: Yeah, it's a really special place to be, to live and work. I think my story's very well-documented, what the university means to me, I think what I mean to the university - I hope. They're in the back there (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: That's for you, Josh.

DAVID CARLE: More for Jeremy (smiling).

It's a total team effort. That's what I love about our institution. We talked about it a bit on Wednesday. I know a lot has been made of, like, haves and have not's coming into college athletics and college hockey.

To me, we're the thing that everybody wants. You want a smaller school who doesn't have this behemoth budget and fan base and alumni base to still be able to be successful. I think we're the proof of concept that it's still possible.

Yes, do we have advantages over other places? I am not sitting up here crying poor that we don't have things. But we are a small institution. We are very committed, though, to our hockey program and making it a great experience for our student-athletes, our fans and our alumni.

You don't have to be big in hockey to be good. You have to invest and you have to care and have the right people to do great things.

In a sport landscape, in college athletics, I think a place like Denver should really be celebrated.

THE MODERATOR: Three national championships and two gold medals. Ever feel like you're living in a fantasy world?

DAVID CARLE: Are you asking questions now (smiling)?

No, I mean, yeah, I'm very blessed in my life to have what I have, be a part of great teams, be around people like Fish for USA and John Vanbiesbrouck, Jeremy and Josh, John Miller. Mr. Ritchie is smiling from above as we lost him last year. Again, you want to be around really good people.

I've been really fortunate in my life from our staff and, again, the people that support in so many different areas.

These things don't just happen. It's not me. It's not one of the players. It's the total collective that makes these things achievable. I'm super grateful and blessed to have the opportunities I've had in my life.

Q. At what point of the season do you reflect on what you've built? Does it feel any different every single time that you pick up a title?

DAVID CARLE: Yeah, I mean, every season is very unique and different. This team was certainly different than the ones I've been a part of since 2017. But there are similarities, as well.

The guys hit on a lot of it. You could watch this press conference from '17, '22, '24 and '26, you'd hear the same things about culture, team first, selflessness and all of that. So there are a lot of similarities. How we get to that end result is very different.

I'm not naïve enough to think that in this tournament, single elimination, you need some really good things to go your way. You have to control what you can, and what is in your control, but there's a lot that's out of your control as well that needs to go your way.

Certainly that's been the experience here, World Juniors as well. These events that are one-and-done, they can go so many different ways. Again, just feel really proud and blessed to have been a part of it.

Now our conference, like, again, I think it's eight out of 10, is that what it is? Again, I would just harken back to my last answer, the NCHC, a single-sport conference. No school is a big-time football school. Do we love our hockey programs? Yes, absolutely. But we invest, have great leadership from our commissioner down.

Again, I think we're seeing that money doesn't buy everything. Bigness doesn't win championships all the time, at least in our sport. Maybe that's changing. Everybody seems to think it is, could or will. I will tell you we will do our damndest in our conference and in Denver to make sure that it doesn't happen that way.

We're really proud to represent the NCHC, the best league in college hockey. If you're a kid that wants to win and develop, we think it's the best place to be.

THE MODERATOR: David, thank you.

DAVID CARLE: Thank you. Have a great summer.

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